

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction  
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Questions and Answers on Instructional Coaches

<b>Q.</b>	<b>What does an instructional coach do?</b>
<b>A.</b>	The duties of an instructional coach vary from school to school; however, there are common elements including modeling of lessons, helping teachers review data, improving lesson design, leading study groups, etc. The basic role of an instructional coach is to increase instructional capacity of teachers so they can better incorporate literacy or math into their instruction (Hall, 2004). An instructional coach is one who supports others in building their teaching skills, assists others in applying new knowledge, and provides ongoing professional development.
<b>Q.</b>	<b>Why would a school or district employ an instructional coach?</b>
<b>A.</b>	Districts and schools employ instructional coaches as both a method of improving student academic achievement and to enhance professional growth for teachers. The main duty of a coach is to support teachers. Coaches provide leadership within the school, work cooperatively and collaboratively with other professionals, serve as a resource, consult with teachers on a one-to-one basis, facilitate small group discussions, model lessons, observe in classrooms, assist in devising strategies for hard-to-reach students, serve as a liaison between administration and teachers, provide professional development opportunities, assist with the administration and analysis of assessments, and become involved in evaluating the school plans. They are an excellent tool for facilitating professional development.
<b>Q.</b>	<b>What qualifications are required for instructional coaches?</b>
<b>A.</b>	<p>Instructional coaches are most often veteran teachers who have demonstrated an excellence in their ability to adapt their teaching practices to meet the needs of their students. Instructional coaches must be knowledgeable about content area, the mission of the school/district, effective teaching strategies, student learning, and research supported practices. Qualifications required in North Dakota are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Bachelor Degree – ND Teaching License</li> <li>▶ Work in Area of Licensure</li> <li>▶ Reading or Math Credential</li> </ul> <p>Other recommended qualifications include a master's degree, teaching experience, strong leadership, communication skills, and knowledge in evidence based practices.</p> <p>The "Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse" has a document which highlights four levels of qualifications for literacy coaches from <i>Not Good Enough</i> to <i>The Gold Standard</i>. Log on to their website at <a href="http://www.literacycoachingonline.org/">www.literacycoachingonline.org/</a> to access this document.</p>
<b>Q.</b>	<b>What would instructional coach services look like in a targeted assistance school?</b>
<b>A.</b>	A large district could easily employ an instructional coach or multiple coaches with their Title I funds. The coaches could work with all Title I teachers across the district in Title I schools. In addition, they could work with classroom teachers in Title I schools as long as the focus is on providing better instruction to Title I students. A small district could possibly employ an instructional coach for a percentage of time (i.e., 50%) with Title I funds. The coach could work intensively with the Title I teacher(s) and also work with classroom teachers <b>if</b> the focus was on helping at-risk students. For example, the coach could model or tailor a lesson to help classroom teacher(s) better meet the needs of the struggling students in the classroom.
<b>Q.</b>	<b>What would instructional coach services look like in a schoolwide school?</b>
<b>A.</b>	In a schoolwide school, an instructional coach paid with Title I funds could work with <b>all</b> teachers and students.

<b>Q.</b>	<b>Are instructional coaches limited to reading?</b>
<b>A.</b>	No. Reading coaches are more prevalent in North Dakota due to the Reading First program which requires that schools that receive a grant employ a reading coach. The use of instructional math coaches is also on the rise. Instructional coaches could be employed in any subject that is a need at the school; however, Title I funds would only pay for reading and math.
<b>Q.</b>	<b>Are instructional coaches only utilized in elementary schools?</b>
<b>A.</b>	No. It is certainly more common to see instructional coaches being utilized at the elementary level, especially in North Dakota; however, there is a growing trend to use instructional coaches at the middle and high school levels.
<b>Q.</b>	<b>How can a district pay for instructional coaches?</b>
<b>A.</b>	A handout which overviews the various sources available to fund instructional coaches is available at <a href="http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/coaches.shtm">www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/coaches.shtm</a> on the Title I website. Some funding sources that can be used for instructional coaches include Title I, Title II A, Title V, REAP, program improvement funds, a combination of several funding sources, or general funds.
<b>Q.</b>	<b>Can Title I funds pay for an instructional coach?</b>
<b>A.</b>	Schoolwide Schools – Yes, definitely as long as the use of instructional coaches is part of the approved schoolwide plan and has been approved on their consolidated application. Targeted Assistance Schools – Yes, if certain rules and procedures are followed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ In a targeted assistance Title I program, Title I funds may be used to employ a reading and/or math coach that works exclusively with Title I teachers to assist with strategies and interventions plans for identified Title I students. These coaches could work periodically with classroom teachers as long as the focus is to assist teachers with strategies that can be used specifically with Title I students.</li> </ul>
<b>Q.</b>	<b>How does our school know if the use of an instructional coach is being effective?</b>
<b>A.</b>	Evaluation is a key component in any intervention or new initiative. It is imperative for schools or districts that employ instructional coaches to have a method of evaluating the use of instructional coaches. Evaluation methods can include surveys, checklists, rubrics, self assessments or looking at before-and after-data to link coaching to student achievement gains or teachers professional growth. Sample resources and tools for evaluating the use of an instructional coach are available at <a href="http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/coaches.shtm">www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/coaches.shtm</a> on the Title I website.